Varieties of American Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) developed in the United States and Canada, but has spread around the world. Local varieties have developed in many countries, but there is little research on which should be considered dialects of ASL (such as Bolivian Sign Language) and which have diverged to the point of being distinct languages (such as Malaysian Sign Language).

The following are sign language varieties of ASL in countries other than the US and Canada, languages based on ASL with substratum influence from local sign languages, and mixed languages in which ASL is a component. Distinction follow political boundaries, which may not correspond to linguistic boundaries.

Varieties and descendants of ASL are used throughout the Caribbean, West and Central Africa, and Southeast Asia

Contents

Bolivian Sign Language

Bolivian Sign Language (Lenguaje de Señas Bolivianas, LSB) is a dialect of American Sign Language (ASL) used predominantly by the Deaf in Bolivia.

History

In 1973, American Sign Language was brought to Bolivia by Eleanor and Lloyd Powlison, missionaries from the United States.[2] An indigenous sign language (or perhaps sign languages) existed before the introduction and adoption of American Sign Language, though it is unknown how widespread or unified it was.[3]

The first book of LSB was published in 1992, but more than 90% of the signs were from ASL.[4] Due to research work in the 1990s and 2000s a lot of expressions in LSB were collected by Bolivian Deaf, and education materials for learning LSB or teaching in LSB were published. The dependence on words used in ASL was reduced, but the usage of ASL words still is over 70%.

Today LSB is used by more deaf Bolivians than the reported 400 in 1988 in the Ethnologue report,[1] due to the introduction of bilingual education (LSB as primary language and Spanish as secondary language) originally in Riberalta and its adoption to other schools in Bolivia with the support of the Education Ministry of Bolivia and the growing social exchange of the Deaf.

In 1988, there were a total of 9 deaf institutions in the country and 46,800 deaf Bolivians.[1] In 2002 there were approximately 25 deaf schools.[4]

Bolivian Sign Language	
Lenguaje de Señas Bolivianas LSB	
Native to	Bolivia
Native speakers	350–400 (1988)[1]
Language family	French Sign ■ American Sign ■ **Bolivian Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	bvl
Glottolog	boli1236 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/boli1236) Bolivian Sign Language

Costa Rican Sign Language

Costa Rican Sign Language, also known New Costa Rican Sign Language or Modern Costa Rican Sign Language, is the national sign language of Costa Rica's Deaf community. It is used primarily by people born after 1960, and is about 60% cognate with American Sign Language (Woodward 1991, 1992). It is unrelated to two known village sign languages of Costa Rica, Bribri Sign Language and Brunca Sign Language.[6][7]

Costa Rican Sign Language	
New Costa Rican Sign Language	
Native to	Costa Rica
Language family	Creole of American Sign (French family) and Old Costa Rican Sign
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	csr
Glottolog	cost1249 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/cost1249) Costa Rican Sign Language[5]

Dominican Sign Language

Dominican Sign Language is a local variant of American Sign Language used in the Dominican Republic. Many deaf Dominicans use home sign, and are not fluent in Dominican Sign Language.

Dominican Sign Language	
Native to	Dominican Republic
Language family	French Sign • American Sign ■ **Dominican Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`doq`
Glottolog	`domi1236` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/domi1236) Dominican Sign Language[8]

Francophone African Sign Language

Francophone African Sign Language (*Langue des Signes d'Afrique Francophone*, or LSAF) is the variety, or varieties, of American Sign Language (ASL) used in several francophone countries of Africa. Education for the Deaf in these countries is based on ASL and written French; there is therefore a French influence on the language of the classroom.[12]

With the exception of Algerian Sign Language, the sign languages of francophone Africa are unrelated to French Sign Language, except indirectly through their derivation from ASL. This is because most schools for the deaf in the region were founded by the American missionary Andrew Foster or by his students, starting in 1974. Chadian Sign Language may be closest to Nigerian Sign Language. (A few countries have languages unrelated to either: Madagascar Sign Language derives from Norwegian SL, and Tunisian Sign Language is apparently a language isolate.)

Characteristics

As in other African derivations of ASL, the language has been affected by local gestures and conventions. This is especially true of taboo topics such as sex (Dalle 1996).

Francophone African Sign Language	
Native to	Ivory Coast, Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, and other areas of Francophone West and Central Africa
Native speakers	12,500 in Benin, 530 in Guinea, unknown numbers elsewhere (2008)[9]
Language family	French Sign • American Sign ■ **Francophone African Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	*None* (`mis`) Individual code: `gus` – Guinean Sign Language
Glottolog	`guin1250` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/guin1250) Guinean Sign Language[10] `lang1335` (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/lang1335) Langue des Signes Zairoise[11]

As an example of the French influence on francophone ASL, the word for 'she' is made by pointing with at L-shaped hand, rather than with a simple index finger, because the name of the letter el is homonymous with *elle* ('she') in French. It is not clear to what extent such influence continues outside the classroom.

Location

Francophone African countries which use ASL as the language of Deaf instruction are:

- Senegal
- Mauritania
- Mali
- Guinea
- Ivory Coast
- Burkina Faso
- Togo
- Benin
- Niger
- Chad (from Nigeria)
- Central African Republic
- Gabon
- Republic of Congo (Brazzaville; from Nigeria)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa; FSL is also used)
- Burundi
- Morocco

Ghanaian Sign Language

Ghanaian Sign Language is the national sign language of deaf people in Ghana, descended from American Sign Language.[13][14] It was introduced in 1957 by Andrew Foster, a deaf African-American missionary, as there had been no education or organizations for the deaf previously. Foster went on to establish the first school for the deaf in Nigeria a few years later, and Nigerian Sign Language shows influence from GSL. GSL is unrelated to indigenous Ghanaian sign languages such as Adamorobe Sign Language and Nanabin Sign Language.

There are nine schools for the deaf in Ghana.

Ghanaian Sign Language	
Native to	Ghana
Native speakers	6,000+ (2004)[13]
Language family	French Sign - American Sign - **Ghanaian Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	gse
Glottolog	ghan1235 (http://glottolo g.org/resource/languoid/i d/ghan1235) Ghanaian Sign Language[11]

Greek Sign Language

Greek SL formed in the 1950s when American Sign Language and French Sign Language came together, with admixture from indigenous sign.

Indonesian sign languages

Indonesian Sign Language, or Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia (BISINDO), is any of several related deaf sign languages of Indonesia, at least on the island of Java. It is based on American Sign Language (perhaps via Malaysian Sign Language), with local admixture in different cities. Although presented as a coherent language when advocating for recognition by the Indonesian government and use in education, the varieties used in different cities may not be mutually intelligible.

Jamaican Sign Language

Jamaican Sign Language (JSL) is a local variant of American Sign Language used in Jamaica. It is supplanting the indigenous Jamaican Country Sign Language.

Jamaican Sign Language	
JSL	
Native to	Jamaica
Native speakers	7,500 (2011)[15]
Language family	French Sign
	• American Sign
	• **Jamaican Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`jls`

Glottolog	`jama1263 (http://glottolo`
	`g.org/resource/languoid/i`
	`d/jama1263)`
	Jamaican Sign Language[16]

Malaysian Sign Language

Malaysian Sign Language (Malay: *Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia,* or BIM) is the principal language of the deaf community of Malaysia. BIM has many dialects, differing from state to state.[17]

Malaysian Sign Language was born when the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf was established in 1998 and use has expanded among deaf leaders and participants. It is based on American Sign Language (ASL), but the two are considered different languages. BIM in turn has been the basis for Indonesian Sign Language.

Moroccan Sign Language

Moroccan Sign Language (MSL) is the language of the deaf community of Tetouan and some other cities of Morocco.

Moroccan Sign Language was created by American Peace Corps volunteers in Tetouan c. 1987, from American Sign Language (ASL) and existing signs; there is less than a 50% lexical similarity with ASL. It is not clear if the 'existing signs' were home sign or an established village sign language. The language is used in three programs for the deaf, but not throughout the country: It is not used in the large cities of Rabat, Tangier, or Casa Blanca, for example.

Moroccan Sign Language	
MSL	
Native to	Morocco
Region	Tetouan
Native speakers	63,000 (2008)[18]
Language family	French Sign
	• American Sign-based creole?
	• **Moroccan Sign Language**

In Oujda, near the Algerian border, Algerian Sign Language is used, or at least the local sign language has been strongly influenced by it.[18]

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	xms
Glottolog	moro1242 (http://glotto log.org/resource/languo id/id/moro1242) Moroccan Sign Language

Nigerian Sign Language

Nigerian Sign Language, NSL is the national sign language of deaf people in Nigeria. It was introduced in 1960, a few years after Ghanaian Sign Language, by Andrew Foster, a deaf African-American missionary, and is based on American Sign Language (and indeed may be considered a dialect of ASL), as there had been no education or organizations for the deaf previously. It is coded as nsi on the repository of languages of the world by SIL International. There is a Ghanaian influence in NSL; both are based on American Sign Language. NSL is unrelated to local Nigerian sign languages such as Hausa Sign Language, Yoruba Sign Language, and Bura Sign Language. The Save the Deaf and Endangered Languages Initiative[21] and Nigerian National Association of the Deaf[22] have been working to document indigenous and national varieties of NSL both for research and reference for the Nigerian deaf population. [23][24]

Chadian and Congolese teachers for the deaf are trained in Nigeria. There are deaf schools in Chad in N'Djamena, Sarh, and Moundou.

Nigerian Sign Language	
Native to	Nigeria, Chad, Republic of Congo
Native speakers	2,800 in Chad (2008)[19] unknown number in Nigeria[20]
Language family	French Sign - American Sign **Nigerian Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: nsi – Nigerian Sign cds – Chadian Sign
Glottolog	nige1259 (htt p://glottolog.o rg/resource/lan guoid/id/nige12 59) Nigerian Sign

Panamanian Sign Language

Panamanian Sign Language *(Lengua de señas panameñas,* LSP) is one of two deaf sign languages of Panama. It derived from American Sign Language and influenced by Salvadoran Sign Language.[25][26]

See also Chiriqui Sign Language.

Panamanian Sign Language	
Lengua de señas panameñas	
Native to	Panama
Language family	French Sign - American Sign **Panamanian Sign Language**

Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`lsp`
Glottolog	pana1308 (http://glottolo g.org/resource/languoid/i d/pana1308) Panamanian Sign Language

Philippine Sign Language

FSL is believed to be part of the French Sign Language family.[27] It has been strongly influenced by American Sign Language since the establishment in 1907 of the School for the Deaf and Blind (SDB) (now the Philippine School for the Deaf) by Delia Delight Rice (1883-1964), an American Thomasite teacher born to deaf parents.[28] The school was run and managed by American principals until the 1940s. In the 1960s, contact with American Sign Language continued through the launching of the Deaf Evangelistic Alliance Foundation and the Laguna Christian College for the Deaf. Another source of ASL influence was the assignment of volunteers from the United States Peace Corps, who were stationed at various places in the Philippines from 1974 through 1989, as well as religious organizations that promoted ASL and Manually Coded English.[29] Starting in 1982, the International Deaf Education Association (IDEA), led by former Peace Corps volunteer G. Dennis Drake, established a series of residential elementary programs in Bohol using Philippine Sign Language as the primary language of instruction.[30][31] The Bohol Deaf Academy also primarily emphasizes Philippine Sign Language.[32]

Usage of Filipino Sign Language was reported in 2009 as being used by 54% of sign-language users in the Philippines.[33]

Puerto Rican Sign Language

Puerto Rican Sign Language (PRSL) is a variety or descendant of American Sign Language, which was introduced to Puerto Rico in 1907. It is not clear how far PRSL may have diverged from ASL, but *Ethnologue* speaks of bilingualism in ASL as well as speakers who know only PRSL.[34]

Puerto Rican Sign Language	
PRSL	
Lengua de señas puertorriqueña	
Native to	Puerto Rico
Ethnicity	8,000 to 40,000 deaf (1986)[34]
Language family	French Sign - American Sign **Puerto Rican Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`psl`
Glottolog	puer1237 (http://glottolo g.org/resource/languoid/i d/puer1237) Puerto Rican Sign Language

Sierra Leonean Sign Language

Sierra Leonean Sign Language is a variety or descendant of American Sign Language (ASL) used in schools for the deaf in Sierra Leone, or at least in the capital Freetown. As in much of West Africa, the first schools for the deaf were founded by the American missionary Andrew Foster or his students.

Sierra Leonean Sign Language	
Native to	Sierra Leone
Region	Freetown
Native speakers	200 (2008)[35]
Language family	French Sign • American Sign • **Sierra Leonean Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`sgx`
Glottolog	`sier1246 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/sier1246)` Sierra Leone Sign Language

Selangor Sign Language

Selangor Sign Language (SSL), also known as Kuala Lumpur Sign Language (KLSL), is a sign language used in Malaysia. It was originally based on American Sign Language (ASL) but has diverged significantly enough to now be considered a language in its own right. Kuala Lumpur was formerly located in the state of Selangor before it became a federal territory in 1974.

Like Penang Sign Language (PSL), it now mainly used by older people, although many younger people can understand it.

Selangor Sign Language	
Bahasa Isyarat Selangor	
Native to	Malaysia
Region	Kuala Lumpur and Selangor
Native speakers	500 (no date)[36] Mostly elderly, all bilingual in Malaysian Sign
Language family	French Sign • American Sign, with local mixture • **Selangor Sign Language**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	`kgi`
Glottolog	`sela1253 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/sela1253)` Selangor Sign Language

Thai Sign Language

Thai Sign Language (TSL) or Modern Standard Thai Sign Language (MSTSL), is the national sign language of Thailand's Deaf community and is used in most parts of the country by the 20% of the estimated 56,000 pre-linguistically deaf people who go to school.[37] Thai Sign Language was acknowledged as "the national

language of deaf people in Thailand" in August 1999, in a resolution signed by the Minister of Education on behalf of the Royal Thai Government. As with many sign languages, the means of transmission to children occurs within families with signing deaf parents and in schools for the deaf. A robust process of language teaching and enculturation among deaf children has been documented and photographed in the Thai residential schools for the deaf.[38]

Thai Sign Language is related to American Sign Language, and belongs to the same language family as ASL.[39] This relatedness is due to language contact and creolisation that has occurred between ASL, which was introduced into deaf schools in Thailand in the 1950s by American-trained Thai educators[40] and at least two indigenous sign languages that were in use at the time: Old Bangkok Sign Language and Old Chiangmai Sign Language.[41]

External links

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